

SPECIAL EVENTS

*The Faculty of Music,
University of Toronto*

*Concert Hall,
Edward Johnson Building*

Lorand Fenyves, *Violinist*

Pierre Souvairan, *Pianist*

Thursday, November 11th, 1965

8:30 p.m.

Programme

SONATA OPUS 78 IN G MAJOR

Brahms

Vivace ma non troppo

Adagio

Allegro molto moderato — Più moderato

The first of Brahms' three sonatas for violin and piano marks the entry of an experienced chamber-music composer into both a new medium and a new phase of ripeness in his writing. The work is a remarkable musical organism, showing the sort of cross-reference of motives between sections and movements also observed in, for instance, his last two symphonies and later songs. The rhythmic motive (tum-te-TUM), given on one note, appears as the main germ of movement one, as an accompaniment element in the middle section of the adagio, and again as the springboard for the main rondo melody of the third movement. As a further binder, thematic rather than merely motivic, the theme of the adagio recurs in the third movement, as the second episode of the rondo and also in a transformed state as part of a masterful summation of ideas in the coda. Close imitation between the two instruments often arises, especially in movements one and three. The theme of the first episode in movement three is suggested by a seemingly-offhand cadential turn of phrase in the passage just preceding it. The rhythms throughout are characteristically inventive, and full of surprises of metre and barring — a tendency which shows itself as early as the eleventh bar of the first movement, where cross-the-bar phrasing and irregular division of both full-bar and half-bar groups occur simultaneously.

That these fascinating intellectual ingenuities come to life in performance is due perhaps to the naturalness and artlessness of much of the material: a peculiarly Brahmsian paradox. Thus the recurrent figure begins its career as the upbeat to a typically Viennese waltz; the theme of the adagio — in its warm, low-register, double-stopped version on the violin — incorporates the "horn-fifth" progression traditionally symbolic of the German fairy-tale mystique; one of the closest imitative sequences (towards the end of the first-movement exposition) tails off naturally into some almost-Wagnerian "forest murmurs"; that first episode in the rondo turns out to be a Hungarian dance; and the first movement's cross-rhythms, however intricate, always suggest the light, slightly sentimental, waltz character as their point of origin.

SONATA FOR SOLO VIOLIN

Bartok

Tempo di ciaccona

Fuga: Risoluto, non troppo vivo

Melodia: Adagio

Presto

The Solo Violin Sonata, one of the last major works of Bartok, was composed in the United States in 1943-44, between the Concerto for Orchestra and the Third Piano Concerto (his last completed composition). It was written for Yehudi Menuhin, long a champion of the Violin Concerto (1938). He gave the premiere of the Sonata and also edited the score for publication.

Though not a string player himself, Bela Bartok showed a natural feeling for the possibilities of string technique as well as for string sonorities. One has only to think of the two rhapsodies, the two earlier sonatas for violin (both with piano), the incomparable six quartets, the series of violin duets based on folk themes — a virtual catalogue of the major achievements in string writing of this century.

The task he set himself in the present work was to re-create in modern terms the abstract forms and the texture (a sort of skeletal polyphony) found in the solo sonatas of Bach. The opening movement employs the characteristically ornate chaconne rhythm as remembered from the largest movement of Bach's D minor Partita. The severity of the chaconne is offset by a few rhythmic freedoms and by two appearances of a contrasting secondary theme. The fugue which follows, while reminiscent again in texture of those by Bach for this medium, is also related, by the "spurting" delivery of its subject, to other fugal passages by Bartok himself, those in the Sonata for two pianos and percussion and the Fifth Quartet in particular. The spurting, aside from its tension of expression, is a device which facilitates the illusion of various "voices" in the fugue, where one "voice" fills out the silences of another. The "Melodia" is an eloquent contrast, at once the most colorful (mute, tremolos, harmonics, pizzicati) and the most transparent movement in the whole work, where notably few passages of chord-playing occur. The finale is the only part of the Sonata which seems dependent on the familiar Bartokian folk sources — with its rondo form, insistent driving rhythms, and folk-like scalar turns.

— INTERMISSION —

SONATA OPUS 47 IN A MAJOR (*Kreutzer*)*Beethoven*

Adagio sostenuto — Presto

Andante con Variazioni

Finale: Presto

The most brilliant of Beethoven's ten violin-and-piano sonatas is named for its dedicatee, the French violin pedagogue, composer, and concert performer Rodolphe Kreutzer, whom Beethoven much admired. However, another violinist, of more highly charged temperament than Kreutzer, had requested the work in the first place and played the violin part at the premiere in Vienna in 1803, with Beethoven as pianist. This was the gifted mulatto George Augustus Bridgetower. The request was a sudden one, and Beethoven is reported to have composed the wonderful first movement in four days. Time being too short after the completion of the variation movement, he borrowed the finale from another A major Sonata, the already-composed Opus 30, No. 1.

As in his piano solo sonatas, Beethoven distinguished between the style and scale suited to domestic chamber music and that suited to the concert hall. The *Kreutzer* is definitely a concert sonata. The give-and-take between the two performers amounts to a contest of brilliancies, as Beethoven indeed underlined by calling the work a "sonata written in a very *concertante* style, almost like a concerto."

The first movement is top-drawer Beethoven — a concentrated, rhythmically-irresistible drama, dominated by a simple rhythmic element or signal, of two notes (short, long) the second a step higher than the first (the same motive was prominent later in the third of the *Rasumovsky* quartets). A slow introduction, starting in major key, gives a mysterious approach to this little germ-motive; then we abruptly launch into a heaving, fast-tempo discourse on it, in the minor. Its close rhythmic relatives mark the secondary group of themes, including a harrowing "whirling-dervish" passage played by violin and piano-bass in octaves. The whole has extraordinary energy and dynamic interplay, only given momentary check in a slow pause before the again-headlong coda section.

The variations and rondo-finale are more conventional music. The variations are late-roccoco in their charm and floridity, while the rondo is energetic in the manner of an entertaining tarantella, and it restores the scarcely-touched main key, the major on A. Some commentators have deplored an alleged "decline in inspiration" and unseemly lightness of the later portions of the sonata, perhaps because Beethoven elsewhere so often achieves a dramatic summation-quality in his finales. The defense of this work is partly contained in D. F. Tovey's shrewd reminder that classical finales are nearly always looser-textured than first movements. It is also suggested, however, in Beethoven's own designation of the *Kreutzer* (referred to above) as a "quasi-concerto." Dramatic brilliance giving way to a more decorative and entertaining kind of brilliance is the pattern, after all, of some of the greatest of the classical concertos.

Program Notes by John Beckwith